



16710
December 21, 2015

CAPTAIN OF THE PORT, WESTERN ALASKA NAVIGATION SAFETY ADVISORY

Subj: **2015-2016 OPERATING PROCEDURES FOR SEVERE WEATHER IN THE
ALEUTIAN ISLANDS AND PRIBILOF ISLANDS**

Overview:

1. The Captain of the Port (COTP), Western Alaska, through consultation with marine pilot associations, vessel operators, and port authorities, developed these operating procedures (hereafter, *Procedures*) for vessels in port or at anchor in the Aleutian or Pribilof Islands, with an emphasis on Dutch Harbor, Alaska. These *Procedures* were developed to address the frequent and severe storms that impact both the Aleutian and Pribilof Islands. They are based on safety recommendations from a Coast Guard investigation of the M/V KUROSHIMA – a 370-foot cargo vessel that broke away from its anchorage in Summer Bay on Unalaska Island during a winter storm in November 1997 and ran aground, spilling approximately 39,000 gallons of heavy fuel oil. Two crewmen were killed in the incident.
2. For these *Procedures*, **severe weather** is defined as: sustained winds that exceed 45 knots, wind gusts that exceed 60 knots, or a “winter storm warning” by the National Weather Service for any part of the Aleutian or Pribilof Islands.
3. These *Procedures* **automatically go into effect whenever** severe weather occurs or is forecast to occur within 48 hours.
4. The COTP may order a vessel to operate or anchor in the manner directed when there is reasonable cause to believe the vessel is not in compliance with any regulation, law, or treaty, or it has been determined that such order is justified in the interest of safety by reason of weather, visibility, sea conditions, temporary port congestion, other temporary hazardous circumstances, or condition of the vessel pursuant to Title 33 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) §160.111.

Risk Management:

1. The master is ultimately responsible for the safe operation of their vessel at all times. Adherence to appropriate risk mitigation measures in accordance with these jointly developed *Procedures* demonstrates forehandedness on the part of the master, and is in keeping with

prudent seamanship. It is always the master's responsibility to take all necessary steps to effectively mitigate risks in circumstances where these operating *Procedures* may fall short.

2. Factors considered in determining whether a vessel poses excessive risk include, but are not limited to: vessel location, on scene weather, machinery/equipment status, dragging anchor, vessel load status (to determine draft/free surface area), cargo stowage (ready for sea), number of vessels alongside or scheduled alongside, estimated duration of cargo operation, and availability of resources (tugs, pilots, available dock space, etc.).

3. Agents should monitor VHF channel 16 to facilitate rapid communication in the event their vessel is adversely impacted by severe weather.

Avoiding Severe Weather:

1. A vessel that intends to operate and/or anchor within three (3) nautical miles of the Aleutian or Pribilof Islands in order to avoid severe weather (i.e., **storm avoidance**) constitutes a hazardous condition. In these instances, the agent, master, operator, or person in charge shall immediately notify the Coast Guard in accordance with 33 CFR §160.216.

Anchoring:

1. The master shall use all available means to detect dragging of the vessel's anchor. A proper anchor watch shall be maintained at all times in accordance with 33 CFR §164.19.

2. The master shall ensure engineering plants remain in ready condition and machinery is not taken out of service for maintenance during severe weather. In addition, the anchor winch must also remain in a ready status.

3. A vessel dragging anchor during severe weather **in the Aleutian or Pribilof Islands** constitutes a hazardous condition. In these instances, the agent, master, operator, or person in charge shall immediately notify the Coast Guard in accordance with 33 CFR §160.216.

4. Whenever a vessel drags anchor during cargo operations, loading/offloading shall be terminated until more favorable conditions prevail.

5. Whenever sustained winds exceed 45 knots or an opposite rolling moment in excess of 10 degrees occurs between vessels during cargo operations, loading/offloading shall be terminated and the vessels shall separate until more favorable conditions prevail.

6. While at anchor **in/near Dutch Harbor**, the master must ensure vessel operations are consistent with City of Unalaska ordinances. Both anchors on the vessel shall have 10 useable shots of chain for the vessel to anchor. A secondary anchor shall be available for immediate deployment, as there is a history of vessels fouling their anchors on abandoned cables and debris on the harbor bottom in Unalaska.

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Contacting the Coast Guard:

Coast Guard Unit	Email	Business Hours	24 Hours
Sector Anchorage	Sector.Anchorage@uscg.mil	(907) 428-4189	(907) 428-4100
Marine Safety Detachment Dutch Harbor	MSDDutchHarbor@uscg.mil	(907) 581-3466	(907) 359-1575

These *Procedures* supersede all previous Special Operating Guidelines for the Aleutian and Pribilof Islands. I invite your feedback and proposed revisions. As best practices evolve and lessons are learned, I anticipate and welcome changes to these *Procedures*.

Sincerely,



P. ALBERTSON
Captain, U.S. Coast Guard
Commander, Sector Anchorage

Enclosure: National Weather Service Alaska Region Marine Zones

Copy: Commander, Seventeenth Coast Guard District (dp)
Supervisor, Marine Safety Detachment Dutch Harbor

Black Lines = Existing Zone Boundaries
Red Lines = New Zone Boundaries

Alaska Region Marine Zones

- AFC Anchorage
- AFG Fairbanks
- AJK Juneau

